

**STATEMENT OF FEDERICO JUARBE JR.  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR  
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING  
BEFORE THE  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**FEBRUARY 13, 2002**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the initiative contained in the Administration's proposed fiscal year 2003 budget that would transfer three grant programs currently administered by the Labor Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

As we confront a world profoundly changed by the events of September 11, Americans are looking at the men and women of our Armed Forces with a renewed sense of respect and pride. Someday, many of these men and women will exchange their uniforms for civilian attire. Many will be looking to the government for training, job search, and placement assistance to help them successfully make a transition into the civilian economy.

The Bush Administration is deeply committed to helping our veterans find high-quality jobs. Our Nation's veterans deserve nothing less than access to quality services in both employment and training. This Administration understands and deeply appreciates their patriotism, their dedication, and the skills and experiences they bring to the civilian labor force.

Veterans, especially those with service-connected disabilities, deserve the best and most up-to-date services that we can devise. That is why President Bush has tasked the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs to work in close partnership to transfer some of the important

programs presently administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This transfer is part of the President's overall strategy to increase the effectiveness and accountability of all government programs. It is designed to provide the inter-related services of education, training, vocational rehabilitation, homeless veterans reintegration, and employment as part of an integrated, seamless continuum of services. By operating all of these programs in the VA – one government agency dedicated to serving the single constituency of veterans – the duplication of effort can be minimized and services can be strengthened.

In particular, the President's FY 2003 budget submission would transfer to the VA three grant programs: (1) the Local Veterans Employment Representatives grants; (2) the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program; and (3) the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. In addition, the Transition Assistance Program, which provides job training, employment assistance, and other transitional services to separating veterans, will also be transferred to VA.

The agencies are coordinating on the Administration's initiative. The Office of Management and Budget, VETS, and VA have working groups focusing on various administrative, financial, and legislative implications of the proposed transfer. The total budget transfer to the VA would amount to \$197 million.

The transfer also includes shifting 199 VETS employees to the VA and clearly this aspect of the proposal needs to be conducted with sensitivity to the individuals involved. DOL and VA are jointly working on the legislative language to accomplish this transfer, which will soon be sent to Congress.

We intend that this transfer be a smooth one. We will work with our partners in the states and veterans' community in a manner that will assure all of their concerns are considered, and that the best system for delivering these services is designed. It is our goal that no veterans will encounter a gap or a reduction in service while these changes take place. We cannot afford to allow any veteran to be left behind. The Department of Labor will continue to do whatever we can to support our veterans fully, and we pledge to work cooperatively with the Committee to ensure that America's veterans receive the best employment and training services possible.

Thank you. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.